

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, EGEN, SA
SUBJECT: MORE ON SAG CLAMPDOWN ON COMPANIES EMPLOYING WOMEN

REF: DHAHRAN 0187

1. REFTEL REPORTED MINISTRY OF INTERIOR'S CRACKDOWN ON LOCAL COMPANIES WHICH EMPLOY WOMEN. MANY OF THE WOMEN WORKERS, OF COURSE, ARE EMPLOYED BY AMERICAN COMPANIES WHICH ARE CLEARLY WORRIED BY CEASE AND DESIST ORDERS ISSUED TO SOME FIRMS OPERATING IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT. A FEW COMPANIES HAVE TAKEN EXTREME STEP OF DISCHARGING ALL THEIR FEMALE EMPLOYEES, AND ARAMCO HAS ORDERED ALL ITS CONTRACTORS TO FIRE ALL WIVES OF ARAMCO EMPLOYEES THEY ARE PRESENTLY EMPLOYING. EVEN MAJOR LOCAL COMPANIES, LIKE THOSE OF KHALED TURKI (MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION FOR JUBAIL AND YNDBO) AND SULIMAN OLAYAN, HAVE NOT BEEN EXEMPTED FROM THE ORDER.

2. TWO LARGEST AMERICAN COMPANIES AFFECTED, BECHTEL AND NORTHRUP (AND NORTHRUP'S CONTRACTORS OPERATING HERE IN SUPPORT OF THE PEACEHAWK PROGRAM) ARE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO RETAIN THEIR FEMALE EMPLOYEES. BECHTEL,
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WHICH ACTS AS AGENT OF SAG IN PROJECT-MANAGING THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW INDUSTRIAL CITY OF JUBAIL, ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THAT ROYAL COMMISSION DIRECTOR-GENERAL WOULD RESOLVE PROBLEM WITH HIS SUPERIORS (CROWN PRINCE FAHD AND PLANNING MINISTER NAZER) IN RIYADH. UPON HIS RETURN FROM APPEALING BECHTEL'S CASE IN RIYADH, HOWEVER, THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ADVISED BECHTEL THAT HE WAS

WITHDRAWING ENTIRELY FROM MATTER AND US COMPANY WOULD HAVE TO RESOLVE MATTER BY ITSELF. BECHTEL THEN ASKED SON OF ITS SAUDI PARTNER, KHALID OLAYAN, TO PURSUE MATTER WITH SAG AUTHORITIES IN RIYADH. OLAYAN RETURNED THIS WEEK EMPTY-HANDED BUT COMMENTED THAT HE IS "OPTIMISTIC" THAT SOLUTION TO PROBLEM WOULD BE FOUND. IN MEANTIME, BECHTEL HAS TRUCE WITH MINISTRY OF INTERIOR REPRESENTATIVE, WHO HAS AGREED TO DELAY ENFORCING HIS FEBRUARY 15 ORDER UNTIL SUCH TIME AS BECHTEL HAS APPEALED DECISION IN RIYADH.

3. NORTHRUP'S APPEAL FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE CEASE AND DESIST ORDER APPARENTLY IS MAKING GREATER HEADWAY. ACCORDING TO NORTHRUP, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION (MODA) AGREED ORALLY IN 1973 TO US CONTRACTOR EMPLOYING WOMEN ON ITS PROJECTS. IN A LATE-FEBRUARY, 1977 EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN USMTM AND MODA, DEPUTY MINISTER PRINCE TURKI REAFFIRMED THAT COMMITMENT BUT NOTED THAT, AS BEFORE, NOTHING IS TO BE PUT IN WRITING. ON FEBRUARY 28 HE TOLD USMTM'S GENERAL AHMANN THAT HE HOPES TO RESOLVE THE MATTER AND THAT NORTHRUP AND ITS CONTRACTORS SHOULD CONTINUE TO EMPLOY WOMEN. USMTM'S GOVERNMENT RELATIONS SPECIALIST SUBSEQUENTLY ADVISED PROVINCIAL MINISTRY OF INTERIOR REPRESENTATIVE OF MODA'S INTEREST AND LATTER AGREED TO TAKE NO FURTHER ACTION UNTIL MATTER RESOLVED BETWEEN HIS MINISTRY AND MODA. MEANWHILE, NORTHRUP'S GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICER ALSO PURSUED MATTER WITH MODA AND WAS GIVEN SAME REPLY, ONE ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION WAS FURNISHED -- IF MINISTRY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF INTERIOR OFFICIALS MAKE MOVE TO ENFORCE IT ORDER, NORTHRUP SHOULD IMMEDIATELY REPORT MATTER TO COLONEL WHO IS CHIEF OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IN EASTERN PROVINCE.

4. COMMENT: AS NOTED EARLIER, AMERICAN COMPANIES ARE CONCERNED AS TO IMPACT STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF BAN ON WOMEN EMPLOYEES WILL HAVE ON THEIR OPERATIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE OVERREACTING TO SITUATION BUT WE FIND THEIR WORRIES UNDERSTANDABLE. WE ARE ADVISING THEM TO MOVE SLOWLY AND CONSIDER THE CURRENT BAN AS A TEMPORARY SAG MOVE TO KEEP CONSERVATIVE MOSLEM ELEMENTS HAPPY, BUT WHICH MAY WELL BE GENERALLY IGNORED AFTER BRIEF FLURRY OF ACTIVITY. ARAMCO'S GOV'T RELATIONS REP IN RIYADH BELIEVES THAT EFFORTS ARE AFOOT WITHING SAG TO REVERSE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR INSTRUCTIONS, WHICH ARE PURPORTED TO HAVE BEEN SIGNED PERSONALLY BY MINISTER OF INTERIOR, PRINCE NAYEF. IT WOULD SEEM MORE IN KEEPING WITH SAUDI PRACTICE,

HOWEVER, IF THE ISSUE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO FADE
AWAY FOR ANOTHER YEAR OR TWO RATHER THAN THAT A
MINISTER'S RULING WOULD BE REVERSED.
BUSHNELL

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